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Letter dated 24 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the communiqué issued today by the office of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity concerning the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text circulated to the members of the Security Council and issued as a Security Council document.

(*Signed*) Abdallah **Baali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 24 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué from the office of the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) concerning the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea

Algiers, 24 May 2000

On Wednesday, the office of the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) issued the following communiqué concerning the mission of Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, Special Envoy of the current Chairman of OAU, carried out from 21 to 24 May in Addis Ababa and Asmara:

On the initiative of Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and current Chairman of OAU, a delegation of the pan-African organization led by Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, Special Envoy of the current Chairman, visited Addis Ababa and Asmara from 21 to 24 May 2000.

This mission forms part of the intensive efforts which are being made by the current Chairman, particularly since the adjournment of the proximity talks at Algiers and the resumption of armed confrontations between Ethiopia and Eritrea; these efforts are aimed at bringing about an immediate end to the fighting and the rapid return of the two parties to the negotiating table with a view to finalizing the consolidated technical arrangements and, hence, implementing the Framework Agreement and the Modalities for the peaceful and final settlement of the territorial dispute between the two parties.

At Addis Ababa, the OAU delegation was received by Mr. Meles Zenaoui, Prime Minister of Ethiopia. At Asmara, since the Head of State was absent from the capital, the delegation met a delegation of senior Eritrean officials headed by Mr. Haile Woldensde, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and also including the principal private secretary and advisers of the President of Eritrea. Moreover, throughout the mission, the Special Envoy maintained close coordination with Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of OAU.

With each of the two parties, the Special Envoy emphatically reiterated the appeal of the current Chairman for an immediate end to the fighting and a rapid resumption of the proximity talks.

The Special Envoy stressed that this appeal is supported by the entire international community, including the United Nations Security Council.

Eritrea declared its readiness to respond immediately and favourably to the two points contained in the appeal of the current Chairman of OAU, namely an immediate halt to the fighting and the resumption of the proximity talks.

Ethiopia, for its part, declares that it is willing to resume the proximity talks immediately, but considers that the fighting cannot be halted before the territorial status quo as of 6 May 1998 is restored.

At the same time, and beyond this fundamental disagreement, the delegation noted that:

1. Ethiopia solemnly declares that it has no territorial designs over Eritrea;

2. Each of the two parties declares its continued support for the Framework Agreement and the Modalities which they accepted, and which were unanimously endorsed by the OAU summit meeting held at Algiers in July 1999;

3. Each of the two parties proclaims its commitment to redeploy its troops on the line of 6 May 1998, in accordance with the modalities they have mutually accepted;

4. Lastly, each of the two parties undertakes to resolve the territorial dispute with the other party on the basis of the relevant colonial treaties and applicable international law, through delimitation and demarcation, with the assistance of the United Nations Cartographic Unit and, if necessary, through recourse to arbitration.

In the face of this situation, OAU deeply regrets that its call for an immediate end to the fighting has not

yet found the fully favourable response that is necessary, although the elements required for a peaceful, just and final settlement of this conflict, and in particular the underlying border dispute, have already been defined by the pan-African organization, accepted by the two parties, and endorsed by the entire international community.

At the same time, OAU expresses its deep concern about the thousands of deaths already caused by the resumption of armed clashes on 12 May, which constitute an appalling toll, along with the suffering and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilian victims of this fratricidal conflict. Moreover, the continuation of this armed conflict is likely to undermine the stability and security of the entire subregion.

It is for this reason that OAU once again renews its urgent appeal for an immediate end to the fighting and the resumption of peace negotiations.

Moreover, and with a view to initiating the de-escalation of the conflict and bringing it to an end:

(a) First, OAU calls upon Ethiopia and Eritrea to proceed immediately to redeploy their respective forces to the points which they controlled on 6 May 1998, in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Modalities and without prejudice to the final status of the territories concerned, which will be determined at the conclusion of the delimitation and demarcation process.

(b) Second, and to this end, OAU calls upon Eritrea to announce immediately its decision to undertake this redeployment in accordance with paragraph 1 of the Modalities and to put it into effect without delay.

(c) Third, and in the same spirit, OAU calls upon Ethiopia to announce, immediately after Eritrea, its decision to redeploy its forces in accordance with paragraph 2 of the Modalities, on the understanding that this redeployment must include all the points taken since 6 February 1999 which were not under Ethiopian control before 6 May 1998.

(d) Fourth, OAU takes note of the statement of Ethiopia that it has no designs on the territory of Eritrea and calls upon Ethiopia to reaffirm this publicly and officially.

(e) Fifth, OAU takes note of the commitment of Ethiopia and Eritrea to implement the Framework Agreement and the Modalities which they have jointly accepted and, in particular, to resolve their border dispute in accordance with the above-mentioned documents.

(f) Sixth, OAU takes note of the willingness of the two parties to finalize rapidly the consolidated technical arrangements, and then to sign the Framework Agreement, the Modalities and the consolidated technical arrangements to establish a formal cessation of hostilities and to implement faithfully all the three documents constituting the plan for the peaceful and final settlement of the dispute between them.

(g) Seventh, on behalf of the current Chairman of OAU, the Special Envoy requests the two parties to send their delegations to Algiers to resume the proximity talks immediately after the publication of the declarations of each of the two parties as announced in paragraphs 2 and 3 above.

OAU hopes that this appeal will be heeded by each of the two parties and that wisdom will prevail in the interests of the two fraternal and neighbouring peoples. It also hopes that the international community will support this step aimed at silencing the guns in this violent conflict and opening the way to the full application of the peace plan which was drawn up by OAU and accepted by the two parties and enjoys the support of the entire international community.